



## CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture

ISSN 1481-4374

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Volume 20 | (2018) Issue 7

Article 8

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### Conflicting Neo-colonialist Narratives in the Representation of Africa in Ngugi and Naipaul's Novels

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### Recommended Citation

Li, Weiping; and Zhang, Xiuli. "Conflicting Neo-colonialist Narratives in the Representation of Africa in Ngugi and Naipaul's Novels." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 20.7 (2018): <<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.3331>>

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**CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture**

ISSN 1481-4374 <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>>  
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**Volume 20 Issue 7 (December 2018) Article 8**  
**Weiping Li and Xiuli Zhang,**  
**"Conflicting Neo-colonialist Narratives**  
**in the Representation of Africa in Ngugi and Naipaul's Novels"**  
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol20/iss7/8>>

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Contents of **CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 20.7 (2018)**  
Special Issue **A Critical Response to Neocolonialism. Ed. Guaqiang Qiao**  
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol20/iss7/>>

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**Abstract:** In their article "Conflicting Neo-colonialist Narratives in the Representation of Africa in Ngugi and Naipaul's Novels" Weiping Li and Xiuli Zhang analyze the conflicting neo-colonialist narratives by comparing the different representations of the post-independent Africa between Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* and Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*. The multiple narrators in *Petals of Blood* expose imperialists' continuing domination of Africa, while the limited third person narrator in *A Bend in the River* blames the African people for the deterioration and chaos of the African society. One from an insider's perspective, the other from the outsider's, Ngugi and Naipaul thus form conflicting narratives on neo-colonialism. With their diverse perspectives, the two writers provide not only clashing representations of African women but also opposing visions of the African future.

## **Weiping LI and Xiuli ZHANG**

### **Conflicting Neo-colonialist Narratives in the Representation of Africa in Ngugi and Naipaul's Novels"**

The ending of colonial order and independence of new African countries after WWII did not necessarily mean the relinquishment of Western colonial powers. The continuing Western influence was reflected in the flexible combinations of the economic, the political, the military, and the ideological. This new manifestation of colonialism became prominent in the 1960s and 1970s. Kwame Nkrumah in *Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of imperialism* (1965) coined the term neocolonialism, and argued that "In place of colonialism, as the main instrument of imperialism, we have today neo-colonialism. [...] The result of neo-colonialism is that foreign capital is used for the exploitation rather than for the development of the less developed parts of the world" (x). Writers like the Kenyan Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1938- ) and the British V. S. Naipaul (1932- ) made conflicting responses to the neo-colonialist condition in their novels *Petals of Blood* (1977) and *A Bend in the River* (1979). Set in Kenya and an unnamed African region in East Africa respectively, just after its independence, the two novels present the corruption of the new African government, its dependence on foreign powers and the deterioration of the African society. However, from different perspectives, Ngugi and Naipaul produced conflicting narratives on neo-colonialism. Ngugi criticized neo-colonialism by exposing the nature of the continuous exploitation of capitalism and imperialism, while Naipaul tended to join the western neo-colonialists in condemning the African people.

The 1960s and 1970s saw a surge of academic enthusiasm towards neo-colonialism. There were many scholastic works concerning neo-colonialism. In the year 1965, Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee in the German Democratic Republic published *The Neo-colonialism of the West German Federal Republic: A Documentation*, in which how Federal Germany implemented its neocolonialist activities was fully presented. In the year 1967, Jack Woddis's *An Introduction to Neo-colonialism* was published. He analyzed the reasons, purpose and characteristics of neo-colonialism, and pointed out that national revolution would inevitably end any form of colonialism. Others like, Samir Amin's *Neo-Colonialism in West Africa*, Colin Leys's *Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of Neo-Colonialism*, E. A. Tarabrin's *Neo-Colonialism and Africa in the 1970s*, William Pomeroy's *American Neo-colonialism: Its Emergence in the Philippines and Asia* and *An American Made Tragedy: Neo-colonialism and Dictatorship in the Philippines*; etc.

Africa was a particular concern in this international context not only to scholars but also to literary critics and writers. For example, Sartre and Fanon expressed their resistance against the new form of imperialism in their works and through their social activities. Writers like Ngugi and Naipaul made conflicting responses in *Petals of Blood* and *A Bend in the River* written in this period. Ngugi sharply exposed the truth that imperialists were still in control of African economy, society and politics, though in indirect ways. And he believed that revolution led by peasants and working class would bring hope to Africa. Naipaul was pessimistic towards African people and their future. He attributed the post-independence failure of Africa to the deep-rooted wickedness of the African people. His educational

background and intellectual orientation to some extent determined his bias against African culture and favor of European culture. In a word, as an intellectual with strong national consciousness, Ngugi's criticism of neo-colonialism was aimed to national independence through revolution; while Naipaul's indebtedness to European culture and his disbelief of African people made his criticism of neo-colonialism not as thorough as that of Ngugi's.

Concerning Ngugi and Naipaul's writings on the post-independent Africa, scholars tend to locate them in the context of post-colonialism (see Amoko and Nixon). Neo-colonialism emphasizes the continuance of colonialism, while post-colonialism conceals to a large extent the fact the colonialism still exists though in different and complex forms. With a posture of resistance, the latter occupies a commanding academic position that is prone to ignore the variations of colonialism itself. By emphasizing neo-colonialism, scholars such as Eid and Nag provided a new approach to understand Ngugi and Naipaul. However, the reasons for the two writers' conflicting representations of the post-independent Africa have not been analyzed. This article is to explore the literary representations of neo-colonialism by comparing Ngugi and Naipaul's different perspectives.

The divergence between Ngugi and Naipaul regarding neo-colonialism lies largely in their disparate perspectives. Although they both depicted the chaos of post-independent African society, and also the corruption of the African government, their reasons for this chaos varied because of their separate viewpoints. For Ngugi, it was the whole system of imperialism, capitalism and colonialism that brought about the current situation. On the contrary, Naipaul attributed it to the deep-rooted wickedness of the African people. Revolution for Ngugi was the only way for Africans to seek freedom from the foreign exploitation, while for Naipaul it was an irrational and barbarous act. Towards a similar society, Ngugi and Naipaul had different narrators to represent. Thus, they had different perspectives and visions. In the nationalist discourse, females were usually associated with the fertility of the land, the prosperity of the nation and its future. Taken the female figures as an example, this thesis would further expound the two writers' divergences on neo-colonialism.

Firstly, Ngugi and Naipaul have different narrators that distinguish their narratives from each other. The narrators from the former were from the local, the indigenous, while that of the latter was from the outside. The insiders as narrators in *Petals of Blood* made a pungent criticism of the erstwhile European imperialism and of its cankerous impact on the African nation by criticizing education as agents of neo-colonialism, exposing the real cause of the corruption of the African Puppet Government, and revealing petty-bourgeoisie's intermediary role in the imperialist control of the African economy. As insiders, they had no escape from the neocolonialist society but resisting or rebelling in various ways. In addition, they envisioned future by involving themselves into different social actions. However, in Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*, the narrator took on an outsider position. From an East African Muslim family, Salim was not indigenous. Like Naipaul himself who came from an Indian family, Salim first stood as a person between the imperialists and the colonized, but eventually became an official interpreter and defender of the imperialist discourse. In this novel, Naipaul criticized the African education, the corruption of the African government and the irresponsibility of the petty-bourgeoisie. In contrast to Ngugi, Naipaul's criticism was not directed to the imperialists, but to the wickedness of the African people. He showed his

indebtedness to the European education and civilization, their effective governance and the spirit of humanity, thus secretly standing by the neocolonialists.

*Petals of Blood* has multiple narrators. The four main characters, along with the sometimes third person omniscient narrator and sometimes third person limited narrator altogether created complex narrations. The narrative begins with first four protagonists' being taken away to the police office to be interrogated about the murder of three prominent Kenyans, Kimeria, Chui and Mzigo. This chapter was divided into five parts, with the four parts respectively presenting the scenes when Munira, Abdulla, Wanjia, and Karega being taken away, and the last part an extract from a news report concerning the murder. It was narrated through a third person omniscient narrator who objectively described the circumstances of the four, their reactions to being taken away, and other people's responses. Like a camera, it recorded exactly what happened at that time with no further explanations. The majority of the novel was narrated through this third person omniscient narrator. The documentary-like narrative impressed the reader with objectivity, thus its depiction of the plight of the African people, and the corruption of the neocolonial African society seemed more reliable.

If the narrative by the third person omniscient narrator functioned as exposing the broad social background, the third person limited narrative opened deeper and more individualistic aspects of that society. The four protagonists told their pasts of twelve years ago respectively from their own perspectives. As eye-witnesses and the very persons who experienced the turbulent rebellions and hopeless post-independent society, the four characters presented their understanding and feelings towards that society and its future. For example, through the narrations of Munira and Karega, the ideological and institutional control of the imperialists after the independence of Africa was fully revealed. Munira and Karega stood for sharply different groups of African intellectuals. Karega seemed speak on the behalf of the author. Remarkably well read, he was sharply critical of elite educational institutions in postcolonial Kenya. He believed that these institutions help perpetuate neocolonial exploitation and oppression and he actively fought against it. In contrast, Munira grew disillusioned and pessimistic towards this society. Karega's vision was more positive and constructive, who dreamt the future when the peasants and workers were united to fight for independence, "a society in which a black few, allied to other interests from Europe, would continue the colonial game of robbing others of their sweat, denying them the right to grow to full flowers in air and sunlight" (Ngugi, *Petals* 348-49). But Munira was in doubt about the "another world, a new world. Could it really be true?" (Ngugi, *Petals* 350). Eventually, he was lost into religious fanaticism and extremism. Through the narrations of the two intellectuals, Ngugi expressed his criticism of western education on African minds and his hope for a potential revolution led by intellectuals like Karega.

Within this narrative frame, there was the inner monologue, revealing the thoughts and experiences that were crucial to the moral changes of the characters. These monologues were usually interwoven with the third person limited narratives. For example, in chapter two, section two, within Munira's narratives, there appeared his inner monologue. It was through his monologues, Munira's identity as a petty-bourgeoisie was thoroughly demonstrated. According to Lenin, the national bourgeoisie has the nature of duality and ambiguity, "where the bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries does support the

national movement, it at the same time works hand in glove with the imperialist bourgeoisie, that is, joins forces with it against all revolutionary movements and revolutionary classes" (Kamenju 130). Fanon called this group of people as "the national middle class," regarded them as economic and spiritual appendages to the colonial states and he called to eliminate them in order to develop the national economy. According to Ngugi, the bourgeoisie in Africa was a large class with different strands in it. There was the section which looked forward to a permanent alliance with imperialism in which it played the role of an intermediary between the bourgeoisie of the western metropolis and the people of the colonies. The prominent African figures like Mzigo, Kimera and Chui who played as the pimping role in the process of neo-colonization after they assumed political ascendancy in the post-independent society belonged to this strand. However, Munira's identification with the imperialists was not that firm. Alienated from the peasants and working class on the one hand, and not being able to be a real part of the imperialist, he became "more and more critical, cynical, disillusioned, bitter and denunciatory in tone" (Ngugi, *Decolonising* 21). In the revolutionary time, he fled away from taking sides. As a son of those who made fortune by farming, Munira distanced himself from the farmers. When Karega, whose mother had worked on his father's land, and whose brother had been his playmate, first came to visit Munira, the latter refused to admit his commonness with Karega. Although he recalled Old Mariamu, Karega's mother, her inseparability from the land, her piety, her special way of making tea, he even "thought of telling this to my visitor (Karega)," eventually Munira only said "We should be grateful for small mercies: some people take tea without milk and without tea-leaves" (Ngugi, *Petals* 57). The once intimate now became "some people," as if he were talking about other people's past. Munira's rejection of his past was a gesture of rejecting the proletariat.

Ngugi also adopted the collective African voices to demonstrate the general opinions of the African people towards the neocolonial activities. With the building of the Trans-Africa road, Ilmorog was put into the agenda of fast development and modernization. The Land was taken from the people; shopping centers, tourist centers and other infrastructure were constructed; machines and measuring instruments of different kinds were in use to promote the economy. To these changes, the Ilmorog people could not resist but accept. With the perspective of the collective, Ngugi depicted the historical circumstances by revealing the inner feelings of the common African people towards the encroachment of foreign forces. When the machines cleared everything, including the huts in the way of trade and progress, as a collective voice, the African expressed their faint resistance and confusion. "As we stood and watched as the machines roared toward Mwathi's place. We said: it cannot be. But they moved toward it. We said: they will be destroyed by Mwathi's fire. [...] But where was Mwathi? There was no Mwathi. He must have vanished, we said, and we waited for his vengeance. Maybe he was never there, we said" (Ngugi, *Petals* 315). This was not an individual voice, but the voice of a large group of people who witnessed their lands being taken, their huts being pushed down.

In contrast, Naipaul's narrator was Salim, a first-person limited narrator, who functioned as the witness of the deterioration of the African society, thus the judge to determine who shall be responsible for the current economic and cultural crisis. According to Said, Naipaul tended to present the narrator as "members of courageous minorities in the Third World," allows him "quite consciously to be turned

into a witness for the Western prosecution" (53), thus acquiring the privilege of making judges. In the politics of blame, Naipaul entitled his narrator Salim the right to accuse the African of the chaos. Ngugi's multiple narrators created a reliable and true to reality narrative, while Naipaul's a rather biased one. From the similarities between the narrator and the implied author, more evidences can be found. In other fictions and non-fictions, Naipaul established a figure of an official interpreter and defender of the western culture. As an Indian intellectual who received western education, Naipaul showed his affiliation to the more liberal, civilized society rather than the barbarous and primitive third world. The imperial control of the institutions accounts for much. As Naipaul once said, "I couldn't have become a writer without London—the whole physical apparatus of publishing, of magazines, the BBC. This apparatus enables a man to make a living." ("Without a Place" 16) And he believed that the third world did not have the readers, "I do not write for Indians, who in any case do not read. My work is only possible in a liberal, civilized Western country. It is not possible in primitive societies" ("Meeting V.S. Naipaul" 45). Naipaul's affiliation to the imperialists can be found in the narrator Salim, who also identified himself with the Europeans. He distanced himself from his family, towards which he had no sense of belonging. With this gesture, Naipaul attempted to endow Salim with the privilege of making judges.

With this privileged and biased perspective, Salim stood by the side of western civilization and progress in terms of economy, education and religion. On the contrast, Ngugi criticized the exploitation of imperialists through the guise of economic assistance, educational assistance and religious salvation. In terms of economy, Naipaul believed that it was Africans' corruption, stupidity and thirst for violence that destroyed the African economy. While for Ngugi, it was the whole system of imperialism and capitalism that produced deterioration of the African economy. On the function and purpose of education, Naipaul believed that the Africans were so wicked that they could not be educated. Like Ferdinand, the African students would become the successor to the corrupted government, thus the corruption would continue because of their evil nature. In contrast, Ngugi exposed educational institutions' role in implementing the imperial control and maintaining the neocolonial system, and also demonstrated how the African intellectuals being educated in the western way resist against the whole system and lead the African revolution. Like Munira, most educated boys became "efficient machines for running a colonial system" (Sicherman, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 20). Eventually they became the agents of the neo-colonialism. Sicherman believed that this was conducted by distancing the students from the Africans, especially their peasant origins ("Ngugi's Colonial Education" 13). However, Karega was depicted as the hope of Africa who actively engaged himself with the proletarians. In the aspect of religion, they also had conflicting narratives due to their different perspectives. Because of Salim the narrator's pro-Europe tendency, the western Christianity was more superior and its intention was pure. In Salim's eye, Father Huismans brought civilization to the barren Africa. "I began to think of him as a pure man. His presence in our town comforted me. His attitudes, his interests, his knowledge, added something to the place, made it less barren" (Naipaul, *A Bend* 62). In contrast, the Africans were evil. They eventually murdered Father Huismans in a very rude and violent way. Kwame Nkrumah noted religion as part of the tools of control and influence. He argued: "In order to halt foreign interference in the affairs of developing countries it is necessary to study, understand, expose and actively combat neo-



colonialism in whatever guise it may appear. For the methods of neo-colonialists are subtle and varied. They operate not only in the economic field, but also in the political, religious, ideological and cultural spheres" (*Neo-Colonialism* 239).

Salim's identification with Christianity indicated his approval of imperialism's continuing influence on Africa. In contrast, with Munira as an example, Ngugi exposed the political scheme underneath the religious movement. Attracted by a new charismatic religious movement led by Lillian, Munira believed that he found another world that he dreamt of. This religious movement declared that "there was no difference between the poor and the rich, the employer and the employed [...] the only thing was acceptance of Christ" (Ngugi, *Petals* 363). It seemed that they affirmed the African the right to be equal. However, its real intention was to eliminate their will to fight. It stated that "Love was the only law that they need to obey. They were to avoid the strife and struggles of this world. This world was a distorted image of the other world. Distorted by Satan. Therefore, the only meaningful struggle was a spiritual battle with Satan" (Ngugi, *Petals* 363). Through these preaches, the real enemy of Africa was switched. It was also revealed that "the whole movement was financed by some churches in America" (Ngugi, *Petals* 363-64). Enchanted by this religion, Munira finally went to self-destroy. For Ngugi, Christianity cannot bring equality and freedom to Africa, but only hardened their lives.

In addition, Salim the narrator was more like a traveler, an outsider who embodied the imperial discourses. Since 1960 when he was invited by the Trinidadian premier to write a documentary account of the region, Naipaul began his voyage into the travel writing. Two years later, his *The Middle Passage* got published, then in 1964, *An Area of Darkness*, in 1969 *The Loss of El Dorado*, in 1972 *The Overcrowded Barracoon and Other Articles*, in 1977 *India: A Wounded Civilization*, in 1980 *A Congo Diary*, and etc. Naipaul continued to publish travel writings concerning the third world and virtually became its cultural interpreter. His large amount of the third world accounting and his eminent position as a literary influence on British and American understanding of the postcolonial era, "have ensured that he is no longer simply viewed as a writer, but as embodying a set of politically charged ideas about Third World-First World relations" (Nixon 14). This helped to define him as an official voice on the Third World-First World relations. Although he exposed the sad and shocking aspects of the Third World society, secretly he was lamenting the bygone glory the First World had brought to the land. Similar to Salim who came from a richer and more civilized community, Naipaul attributed the backwardness and corruption of the Third World society to the deep-rooted wickedness of the indigenous people rather than the exploitation of the Europeans. With an imperial eye, Salim expressed his bias against the African. And as the only official narrator, the African voices were denied. In the post-independent African society, it was impossible for direct imperial control and exploitation; however, Salim behaved like an intermediary who embodied the imperial discourses and continued its influence.

Because of the different perspectives, the future they forecasted was vastly different. For Naipaul, the Africa led by the corrupted and evil Africans was doomed to self-destruction. Through the narration of Metty, Naipaul expressed this pessimistic view towards Africa. "It's going to be very bad here, Salim. [...] They're going to kill everybody who can read and write, everybody who ever put on a jacket and tie, everybody who put on a jacket de boy. [...] They say it is the only way, to go back to the beginning



before it's too late. [...] It is going to be terrible when the President comes" (Naipaul, *A Bend* 275). Compared with Naipaul, Ngugi was full of hope towards the future. He again emphasized this hope for the proletariats and their revolution. "Tomorrow it would be the workers and the peasants leading the struggle and seizing power to overturn the system and all its prying bloodthirsty gods and gnomish angels, bringing to an end the reign of the few over the many and the era of drinking blood and feasting on human flesh" (Ngugi, *Petals* 409).

In the postcolonial studies, the image of the female body or the mother figure is always associated with the exploited land. In the colonial era, females were under the control of imperialism and patriarchy. With the independence of the Third World and the awakening of the female consciousness, it seemed that females acquired more rights and equality. However, imperialism was still operating in a different way. How the writers represent this special experience determines to a large extent his attitudes towards neo-colonialism. Through the representation of the female character Wanja, Ngugi expressed his deep concern for the predicament of African females and his prospect for the future in the female potentiality and power. Wanja was depicted as the symbol of Africa, the land, and the future. Her transformation of being exploited in term of sexuality by the male colonizers to revolt with her sexuality indicated Ngugi's anticipation for national revolution. Taking the female figure as a metaphor of the nation, Ngugi expressed his strong critique against neo-colonialism. While for Naipaul, the female voices in *A Bend in the River* were suppressed. Three types of female characters were displayed under the gaze of the male narrator Salim. The mother figure like Zabeth and the president's mother, the prostitute like the African women that Salim had sexual relationship with, and the European white woman like Yvette, Raymond's wife. Through Salim the narrator, Naipaul expressed his prejudice against the female, especially the African ones. Even Yvette has no equal rights with her husband, let alone the African females whose sole function seemed to provide her bodies to be cultivated till being exhausted. In contrast to Ngugi's taking sexuality as a revolutionary weapon, Naipaul used sexuality as a way of maintaining the imperial and patriarchal order.

In *Petals of Blood*, females' being oppressed by males and African's being exploited by the colonists have the same ideological basis. Women were described as "oppressed" because they were exploited and dominated. Subaltern nations, too, were oppressed on the same basis: they were exploited and dominated by colonial and/or imperial powers. From Wanja's self-narration we can have a general picture of this parallel. Wanja was a smart and beautiful school girl with her body prematurely developed. This inflamed the sexual desire of her father's rich friend who used money to dominate his relationship with females. The lift he gave to her, the afternoon film show at the Royal Cinema in the city, the floral dress that he bought for her, and etc, became the tactics to dominate Wanja. Here money played a crucial part in the process of establishing the abnormal sexual relationship. What money wanted was body, just like the imperialists desired for the African land. Wanja's body was made equal to the African land by Ngugi through the novel. As objects of sexual desires, both Wanja's mature body and the fertile African land were exploited. By narrating Wanja's past, Ngugi expressed his harsh criticism against the imperialists' control and domination of Africa.

While in *A River in the Bend*, the African female voices were represented as either a magician or a prostitute. Zabeth was depicted by Salim as "a person of power, a prophetess," a mystical part of the remote forest, a magician whose special smell "repelled and warned" people away (Naipaul, *A Bend* 10). While for Big Man's mother whose sculptures were built all over the countries, the image of the African mother became a ridiculous parody of Christianity, a ghost that still haunted Africans. Salim regarded this as a cult, and in the heart of it was "about the redemption of the woman of Africa" (Naipaul, *A Bend* 194). The president's crazy worship of his mother who worked all her life in a hotel, his speeches of the African women as noble and respected, sounded ridiculous to Salim. The African females were degenerated by Salim as mystical, primitive and backward. Most importantly, gender discourse was entangled with national discourse. The corrupted Big Man was described as an over-ambitious magician, who offered the vision of a two-hundred-mile "industrial park" along the river. Naipaul satirized the unrealistic political vision by noting that "it was only his wish to appear a greater magician than any other place had ever known" (Naipaul, *A Bend* 9). According to Naipaul, without a healthy cultural system as the base, it was impossible to revitalize the national economy. The grand political project therefore sounded ridiculous. Naipaul's association of the female with the Big Man here indicated his deep-rooted bias against African culture and disbelief of the African people.

Both Ngugi and Naipaul presented females as prostitutes, but in diverse ways. With the representation of African prostitutes, Ngugi exposed the evil nature of neo-colonialism, and expressed his political vision; while Naipaul's prostitutes symbolized the corruption and hopelessness of the African society.

Firstly, by drawing an analogy between the infertility of prostitutes with the barrenness of the land, Ngugi illustrated the continuing influence of imperialism. Wanja's being played with and dumped symbolized Africa's being exhausted. Rain was a crucial symbol in *Petals of Blood*. It was not always in lack of rain in Illmorog, but now this land was cursed and deprived of any harvest. Wanja dreamt of having a baby after back to the farm land, expecting a new way of life. However, the drought and the consequent petition destroyed everything. It was impossible for her to start life anew because of the wound of the past, just as Africa was not able to restart even after the independence. After being dumped, Wanja refused to be a prostitute as her sister. However, with the increasing encroachment of foreign capital and the neo-colonial manipulation, she was driven to be one of the prostitutes. Just as Theng'eta became a profitable national brand to be consumed, Wanja as the African beauty became a prostitute to be exploited. Through the mediator and agency like Kimeria, Chui and Mzigo, the imperialists intensified the control and persecution of the African people. They took away all the valuable things, including the female bodies. Wanja's sister, who was forced to become a prostitute because of her husband's cruelty, was revenged by him who set fire to the cottage where he believed his wife was in. As an agency of the imperialists, this husband represented thousands of African husbands who used their power to harden the lives of their wives. Under this indirect control, the African female went through dual exploitations. As Nicholls states, "the debasement of Wanja (a prostitute) in *Petals of Blood* corresponds with the novel's sense that the forces of neocolonial capital and the indigenous comprador

élite are defiling the Kenyan national economy" (Nicholls 7-8). Wanjia's being childless symbolized the hopelessness of the African future under the chains of the imperial exploitation.

In addition, with the representation of prostitutes, Ngugi expressed his political vision of African revolution. In contrast to Naipaul's condemn of African prostitutes, Ngugi empowered his prostitutes to take sexuality as a forceful weapon. Rather than allowing Wanjia to remain in the shadow of the past, Ngugi empowered the traumatic female body to take revenge. Repetitively Ngugi emphasized the power of Wanjia's body. It was not only that she was sexually attractive, but there was a force in her body that could draw people around together. It was her who united people together to fight. She not only symbolized the African land, but also the African heritage, the history, the tradition and the past. It was from her Abdulla drew strength, awaken from his drunken and despair, and finally took revenge against the parasites and cannibals after years' hesitation. "Wanjia had given back his life. [...] A woman is a world, the world" (Ngugi, *Petals* 374). Wanjia's final revenge indicated Ngugi's advocating of national revolution that was inspired, encouraged and supported by the females. At the crucial night, Wanjia determined to follow her grandfather's heroic action, to take revenge of Mzigo, Kimera and Chui. When questioned by Inspector Godfrey, Karega mentioned that his purpose was to change the whole system rather than kill such individuals as Mzigo, Kimera and Chui. It seemed that the murder of the three people was meaningless to the grand project, the building of a new world. However, it symbolized a new beginning, marked the beginning of the awakening of the African national consciousness. And in this process of awakening, the female Wanjia played an important part. It can be concluded that Ngugi believed in female's role in awakening the African people to unite together to fight against imperialism and capitalism. At the end of the novel, Wanjia was going to give birth to a baby, a sign of the author's belief in a bright future of Africa.

While for Naipaul, prostitution marked the degeneration of the African people. In a response to a debate at a literary festival between Indian women writers on feminist issues, Naipaul stated, "My life is short. I can't listen to banality. This thing about colonialism, this thing about gender oppression, the very word oppression irritates me" (Gibbons). He strived to maintain the order not only concerning the East and the West, the White and the Black, but also the male and the female. Just as the beginning of *A Bend in the River* opens, "the world is what it is," the degeneration of the Africans is what it is. Man can do nothing to change it. The pessimistic tone revealed Naipaul's affirmation of the established world/social/gender order. Therefore, *A Bend in the River*'s presentation of the African prostitute was fixed, static and one-sided. It reflected Naipaul's European-centered perspective. Salim didn't marry and the only sexual relationship he had was with prostitutes, the African prostitutes. When his servant Metty established a home with an African woman and even had a child, Salim was very angry. For him, it was forbidden to marry any of them, for they served only as the objects of sexual desires. He regarded himself privileged to the African people, but in the eyes of the Europeans, he was alike the Africans. This could be reflected from his relationship with Yvette. Sex, which he had only experienced with prostitutes, became different with Yvette partly because Yvette was European, not African. Yvette's relation with Salim symbolized the relation between Europe and Africa. Before Salim had an intimate relationship with Yvette, he lived in his own world in which he was privileged over those Africans. Then

when he became the lover of a white woman, he at the same time became the servant of the Europeans, standing by the imperialists and the African government they supported. Though Salim believed that he was a foreigner, different from the Africans, he actually was controlled by the European forces. Eventually he took revenge through the vulnerable white female by violently beating and humiliating Yvette. At the beginning Yvette's sexual gestures were regarded by Salim as signs of love, while in the end they were taken bitterly as the same with prostitutes. Salim's illusion of the imperialists and his revenge on Yvette indicated that he refused to face the reality that he himself was under the prey of the European imperialists, rather than by the African officials who just performed as the puppies.

To conclude, though both Ngugi and Naipaul present the terrible situation after African independence, they show sharply different views towards the imperialists' new way of exploiting and controlling Africa. From different perspectives, the two authors provide conflicting narratives on neo-colonialism. Ngugi's multiple narrators allow different Africans voice their own stories, their plight and rebellion. Naipaul's first-person narration silences the African voices and defames their revolution. The biased and limited narrator cannot have a general picture of the imperialists' continuing control of Africa, but only the chaos and corruption of the post-independent society. Ngugi attributes it to neo-colonial exploitation, while Naipaul attributes it to the wickedness of the African people. In addition, their different representations of the most vulnerable members of the society, the females, show their divergences on neo-colonialism. For Ngugi, the African females were driven to be prostitutes directly because of the imperialists' exploitation; however, these females, like other proletariats, would take actions to fight. The future of Africa lies in the unification of these proletariats. While for Naipaul, the females are prostitutes, deprived of voice and pleasure. In the course of colonization, females serve only as the scapegoat. The conflicting narratives of Ngugi and Naipaul reflect their oppositions concerning neo-colonialism, one as an insider opposing it, while the other as an outsider standing by it.

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